GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3104
ANSWERED ON:16.03.2001
CONSULTATION WITH FARMERS BEFORE SIGNING WTO AGREEMENTS
SUSHILA SAROJ

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have underlined the basic problems of Indian farmers prior to signing the agreement with WTO in the field of the agricultural products;

(b) if so, whether the farmers organisations, agricultural scientists and agro-economists were also taken into confidence before signing the agreement;

(c) if so, whether the Government have drawn up any programme regarding it to train the agriculturists and exporters of agro-products;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether there is any proposal under consideration to draw up such programme; and

(g) if so, the time by which final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY(SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a) to (g) : Need for liberalisation and suitable disciplines in the world trade in agriculture was felt due to the prevalence of high trade distorting subsidies coupled with high tariffs and plethora of non tariff barriers being practised by the developed countries which led to serious distortions in the prices of agricultural commodities and denial of market access to developing countries like India. After assessing the overall advantages of a rule based and predictable multilateral trading system and after holding necessary consultations, India had signed the Uruguay Round of Agreements at Marrakesh in 1994 and became a founder member of World Trade Organisation (WTO) which came into being on 1.1.1995. By virtue of signing of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, India is automatically entitled to get the most favoured nation (MFN) and national treatment for its exports from all other members of WTO.
As mandated under Article 20 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, negotiations for further progressive liberalisation to establish a fair and market oriented agricultural trading system have begun in the year 2000. Government has held wide ranging consultations with the State Governments, farmers organisations, political parties, various autonomous organisations, agriculture universities and eminent agro-economists before drawing up India`s negotiating proposals in the areas of market access, domestic support, export competition and food security. During these consultations, there was a unanimous view that India in its negotiating proposals must highlight its food security and livelihood concerns while also seeking increased market access for its agricultural exports especially in the markets of the developed countries. Four regional level conferences were also held to sensitise State Governments and farmers in this regard as well as to seek their inputs for finalising the India`s negotiating proposals for the mandated negotiations in agriculture.
The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, Cashew Export Promotion Council, Spices Board, and Export Inspection Council etc. have beenengaged in sensitising exporters about the requirements of international trade in agriculture including the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary standards to be met.The National Agriculture Policy also provides for promotion of use of science and technology through a regular interface between Science and Technology institutions and the domestic producers to make Indian agriculture sector globally competitive.